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*SOME DISCUSSION ON THE AIMS OF
MODERN LIBERALISM,*

BY

CHARLES TREVELYAN.

I.—SOCIAL REFORM.

II.—EDUCATION.

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PREFACE.

The following lectures have been delivered, during the last two years, much in the same form as they are now printed. What appears here is no attempt to raise new issues or plot new programmes. It is merely an attempted concentration of my own ideas on a limited number of subjects, ideas which I believe to be largely shared by those who are friends of national progress.

The recent by-elections have convinced many ardent Liberals that the Salisbury Government is already doomed. They are confident that the country will reverse the verdict of 1895 decisively at the next election. They advocate constant and searching criticism of the administration. The country, they think, when it realises what Toryism is, will soon go back to its old principles. I should admit that there was weight in this sanguine hope, if the people had only a clear knowledge of what the alternative offered by Liberalism might be. But at present there is not enough decision in Liberal policy. There has been a general repudiation of a slavish adherence to the items of the Newcastle or any other programme; but there has not been any emphatic expression of leading principles to replace it. Only two declarations have appeared of the ideas of modern Liberalism since the general election. The first was issued by a small section of Radicals in the House of Commons. Their manifesto declared that the object of the Radical party was the completion of democracy. They advocated specifically Home Rule All Round and the Abolition of the House of Lords. They mentioned, with a tentative vagueness that would do credit to a Tory country gentleman anxious to sit for his county, the comprehensive word Social Reform. In a letter published the following day, Sir Charles Dilke mentioned some Labour questions of minor interest which he rightly thought the Liberals ought to support in this Parliament; but he made no attempt to direct the general course of thought upon political questions.

Since then the National Liberal Federation has discussed the future of our democratic machinery, and laid down in a spirit of great

thoroughly less a list of reforms which most Liberals agree are necessary to make the House of Commons completely efficient and representative.

Now his attention of the most active section of Liberals in and out of Parliament to the purely democratic idea is only partially reassuring. The stalwarts are taking up the old war-ery which met with the most vigorous response in the past, and waving again the banner which led their fathers to victory. But we have reached a new age, and the next victory will be won largely with new weapons. Fresh thought and fresh ideas as the result of thought can alone give life to it. Every age has its leading ideas and necessities. With a people politically dumb, with an isolated and insolent church and aristocracy, the first need of the country was security for the free expression of opinion and a remedy for the ignorance and incompetence of class government. The magnificent ideal of a democratic state is not perfected in Great Britain; much, we all are agreed, remains to be done; but it is approached so nearly that, in a slow and halting way at worst, and often with rapidity, whatever is sanctioned by the convinced intelligence of the majority becomes law and custom.

To the modern Liberal party it is the mighty future of democratic governments that is the problem. It is not so much the perfection of the fabric of the government, the logical insistence on strict representative systems, as the ordering of society as a whole, our democratic empire, the province and possibilities of government, and the expanding and improving of the health, happiness, morality and intellect of men that faces us in the unexplored future.

PATHS OF PROGRESS.

I.

SOCIAL REFORM.

What the Conservative Majority Means.

A great many Liberals, when they saw the results of the last General Election, were in despair. The majority was almost without precedent since England became a democratic country—altogether without precedent for the Conservatives. There are still many friends of progress who have not recovered their confidence.

But there is nothing to show that this wave of political Conservatism is permanent. There is, on the other hand, plenty of evidence to suggest that it is only a wave of hesitation which has passed over the country, until it has made up its mind that reform has taken a practical shape. There are no signs of a real check in ideas of progress. A Tory Government we regard as a misfortune. But that Government came into office on a programme such as might make Lord Derby and the Duke of Wellington turn in their graves. No one anticipates that the programme will be ever fulfilled by which the working man is to have old age pensions, higher wages, steadier trade, and each to own his own house. But it is significant of the times that most of the Tory candidates should have thought it worth while to appeal to the desire of men for a better life, as well as the desire of men to live undisturbed the life they have got already, which is the old Tory theory of happiness.

But an even more emphatic evidence of the way in which the Tories have had to appear to adopt ideas of Progress is the fact that they have admitted into their midst a man who, though he has cut himself off for ever from helping reform, can still use the phraseology of the reformer and talk of doing though he can no longer do. I mean Mr. Joseph Chamberlain.

Now if the Tories have had to make themselves appear so progressive, or if they have in fact absorbed some faint ideas of the value of political progress, it must mean that there is more demand for advance in the country than there has been before. Do you think we are stagnating, or entering upon a period of reaction? What is the meaning, then, of the growth of debating societies and working men's clubs that buzz with discussion on political and economic subjects?

What is the meaning of the rise of a socialistic school in England? What is the meaning of the sale, increasing every year, of newspapers, pamphlets, and the works of great thinkers? Why, nothing but that the mind of the people is harder at work than ever, that day by day they are absorbing new ideas, and that, sooner or later, some of those ideas will so definitely recommend themselves to the mass of men that they will want to see them in practice.

Liberals Not Critics Only.

Now for some time still the Liberals cannot be in the position of legislators. We shall have to continue to be critics of the Tory Government. We shall, I have no doubt, have much to criticise adversely. I only hope we find also something to praise. But we are not to be content merely with being critics and spectators of other people's doings. We have to prepare for the time when we shall again be triumphant. That triumph will come all the sooner if we have a clear understanding of the direction in which our desires are guiding us and of how we can fulfil them if we have the power. Now some people will be very likely to assert that we know what Liberal principles are, and that there are certain eternal ideas which will justify Liberalism in any age. So in one sense there are. Truth, justice, equality, fraternity, and freedom are grand and irrefutable notions which hold good in any age. But what I mean by the principles of a party at any time are the general application which those eternal ideas have to the present day. No doubt Charles I. would have told any Covenanter and Parliament man of Cromwell's way of thinking that all his subjects were free, and that liberty was one of the principles of his government. The whole question turned upon what that liberty consisted in. And before Cromwell and Hampden could get a hearing for the general principle of freedom, they had to explain that it meant not being taxed without consent of Parliament, and not being sent to prison for saying that the Archbishop was no better than the Pope.

So now we to-day must have our own minds clear as to what particular principles are most important for us, and how they apply to Great Britain at this moment.

Now, if our great progressive party is to hold the position it has done in the past, it must represent the most important of the progressive ideas which are in the nation now. It must know that it represents them. And must be the best representative in the sense of taking the widest view of the way in which progress is to come.

It will not do for us to devote our best energies to smaller problems, which are important in themselves, or to principles which must all form part of a just view of polities, but are not now the vital points at issue. Every age has its great aim and tendency. When Henry VIII. and Elizabeth ruled England the truest Liberal was the man who upheld a strong government, because what the nation needed above all things was peace from brawling nobles and from the Armadas of Spain. In the time of Cromwell, the truest Liberal was the man who fought for freedom of conscience. And during this century up till now the truest Liberal has been the man who has struggled to obtain a full democracy, and to place the government in the hands of the whole community. We do not wish to make out that peace, freedom of thought, and democracy are not as necessary now as they ever were. The hope of the future is founded upon them. Without any one of them the reformers of to-day would be bound hand and foot and gagged. But peace, reform, and liberation we possess to-day in whole or in part. And we need clearly to realise that these great ideas for which our fathers have fought are not ends in themselves, but means to the far higher idea which we are now beginning to see a little more clearly before us, the social, moral, and intellectual elevation of the whole people. It is now for the first time possible to devote the whole of the best energies of the nation to a thorough consideration of society, its evils and omissions. We could not do this while civil strife or foreign war took up the whole energy of government. Who would propose Factory Acts, Public Health Acts, Taxation of Ground Values, Higher Education, for Turkey? Such things are the prattle of faddists where justice is unwilling or powerless and where murder runs periodic riot in the streets. Nor could we pay effective attention to the needs of the whole community as long as the rulers were drawn only from one class, who, as all men will do, thought mainly of their own interests and were deaf to the demands of the people who could only complain and not enforce their will.

Now our hands are free, and I hope and believe that the problem of many political generations to come is, for Great Britain at any rate, Social Reform, and if the Liberal party wishes to hold its place as the great organ of modern Progress, it is to that it will devote itself.

Foreign Policy and Ireland.

Do not think that I mean that we ought to tie ourselves down to a narrow insular policy, not considering that one of the reasons of our prosperity is our World Empire. One of the great hopes of the future is that the Anglo-Saxon race, which bids fair, as the centuries go on,

to number all the rest of the nations of the world put together, will unite in the common bonds of race, sentiment, and language, and form a greater security for lasting peace than we have yet dreamt of. In the last three years we have had to turn our attention a great deal away from home. We have been roughly reminded that we are a great nation in whose actions the whole world is interested. In at least three continents we have been called upon to settle questions which, if not met with moderation, good sense, and justice, would have caused as great catastrophes as a bad social policy at home. Of those difficulties far the most important in its ultimate results might have been the quarrel with America. What calamity could exceed the horror of a war between the sister nations? What would do more to check the progress of the world than a state of enmity between us, even if it did not lead us to war?

But there ought to have been no strong nucleus of American opinion ready to hail with delight the suggestion of an attack on England. What, above all, has created that opinion in America? It is the exiled Irish who are at the bottom of President Cleveland's extreme measures. It is there that the Tories are responsible for our troubles. It is there that we, as a nation, are reaping what we have sown. The present Government are the advocates of a policy which will continually act against any closer union of feeling with America or our colonies. They are the cause of our still governing Ireland as Ireland hates to be governed, and wherever in our colonies or in America there are Irish exiles living, there you have now, and will have as long as Ireland is kept in her enforced subjection, a set of active politicians who will be a disruptive and not a friendly influence to us, and who will oppose Imperial Federation, or any other friendly policy, as long as they know that, in their old country, Empire is a synonym for misrule. We, the Home Rulers, are the true Imperialists.

Religious Equality.

And we shall not forget as Liberals that there is much still to be done to put all forms of religious thought on an equal footing. Liberty of expression has been won for all men; but liberty of equal privileges is still incomplete.

Democracy.

We shall not forget also that we are democrats. Although we have got democracy we are not satisfied with the democracy which we have got. We have tried in our regular British way to effect a working compromise. We have left the remnants of aristocratic rule in the House of Lords. We encourage a tendency to plutocracy by

making wealth still an almost necessary qualification for Parliament. We have put our new wine into the old bottles. Some day the old bottles will burst, and our new vintage will no longer be soured by the musty dregs of the past.

The Great Problem.

I come now to the great problem of modern progress. It is this, that peace, freedom and democracy have not, as their more hopeful apostles expected, brought happiness in their train. Somewhat a better place the world certainly has become in the last sixty years. But for a great part of our population it still gives very few glimpses of Eden. And in the mind of every man who deserves the name of progressive to-day, there is a more or less clear realisation that much of the folly and misery of the world is due to evils in society which men could remedy if they pleased. We are always having brought before us in some tragic form the evils of over-work and under-pay, of bad houses, of waste in distribution, of strikes and lock-outs. We see one man falling out by insufficient education, another ruined by drink. We see men and women shivering to death in the hard winters by empty grates, while money is flung away on luxury, or worse, by men who have not earned what they spend. Nowadays, men are beginning to think that these things are not ordered by a dispensation of Providence.

No Class Party Wanted.

Now this problem goes by different names, the Labour question, or the Economic question and others. But I do not like those terms. If you call it the Labour question, you at once make it a class question. You lead men to think that every interest is subordinate to that of the workers with their hands, that they alone need help, that they alone constitute the nation. But we must be honest. No doubt a large majority of the nation are working men or belong to the families of working men, and no doubt the greater share of the evils of the world falls to their lot. As a class they have suffered most from the ignorance and indifference of rulers, and democracy is therefore a greater hope to them than to any others.

We have not forgotten the old fable told by Agrippa to the working men of Rome when they marched out of the city and began the first general strike recorded in history. He told them how the hands and feet and mouth grew jealous of the belly and refused to work for it; and how gradually the belly starved and began to suffer. But after a time the arms also grew lean and the legs lost their strength till at

last they began to see that they and the belly had a common interest. And the hands and feet and mouth consented again to work. So in politics we must consider the State as a whole and not forget that the so-called middle class and upper class are, except for the top-scouring of idle drones, quite as necessary now to industry or to society as the working class. Any Liberal party that is worthy of the name must not look at politics as a means of benefiting or raising the condition of any one section or any one class. It must be a national and not a sectional party. It must realise that no change affects one class without also benefiting or injuring another, and that there are others besides the ordinary wage-earners who have grievances and hopes from legislation. It matters very much to Great Britain that the health and safety of hundreds of thousands of our working men are being lowered and endangered by overwork. But it matters just as much that there is no trade in which hours are so long or so destructive of health as in that of shopkeeping. Then again, the impossibility of getting cheap and healthy houses for working men in our great towns is mainly due to a land system based primarily on the profit to the landlord, not the advantage of the community. But the land system is just as hard on the middle class—on the farmer who cannot get compensation for his improvements; on the shopkeeper who has to bear the whole burden of new rates for public improvements, while the owner of the ground values pays nothing to the rates which are annually enhancing the value of his property. Then, too, advance in Education concerns every class alike.

There must be no labour monopoly. The progress of the future must be the progress of all. We will not allow democracy to degrade itself by aping the selfishness and narrow class interest of an aristocracy.

Nor do I wish to use the phrase, the Economic question. The methods of industry are the most important study in practical politics. But industry is not to be entirely regulated by logical discussion of economic systems. And an increase of public spirit, of humanity, of intelligence in our population might do far more to make our nation happier than laborious economic revolutions without the willing spirit behind them. True, economic theories are valuable, but they must walk hand in hand with higher natures in men if they are to alter the world.

Socialism.

Before discussing the Liberal ideas of reform, it is necessary to say something about those with whom we do not altogether agree. The growth of a Socialist party is causing a good deal of alarm among

some Liberals. Now, as a rule, Liberals treat the Socialist in an altogether mistaken manner. The Socialist is not an enemy. He is only a discontented or over-enthusiastic, and very often unpractical, friend. He claims to have made a new discovery. But a great part of his discovery is as old as the hills, that most men have a very poor time here on earth and that there is a certain sort of society which will bring the millennium, only his millennium is a little different to the thousand and one that went before. Now there has been a book—which has had a great sale in Great Britain—called *Merry England*. There is no better exposition of Socialism of the political I.L.P. type. Now what has given that book its sale? It can hardly be that its readers are entirely persuaded by it, or there ought to be at least one member of the I.L.P. in the House of Commons. Its popularity is due to the bold, trenchant, and true delineation which Blatchford gives of the very dull, very sordid, very unhealthy, very poverty-stricken condition of great masses of population in our large towns. It would be well if there were a dozen Blatchfords preaching *that* in every town of Great Britain. We ought to welcome them as friends. They are only creating a public opinion of the sort that reformers want. The first requirement of reform is that the abuses should be felt.

But it is when the Socialist comes to his sovereign remedy that we cannot go with him, nor will the British elector ever go with him in his industrial revolution. Without entering into the question of whether a Socialist state is desirable or possible economically, the political objection to Socialism as an ideal for which to work is fatal. Let us even assume that it were possible and desirable economically. That assumption depends on the Government administering industry in a more honest, more intelligent and more humane way than it is administered to-day by private individuals. Now have you any political security for this? The imagination refuses to conceive a system of government by which you can be certain of getting in permanence an honest, business-like, humane and intelligent administration. You might for some years. But human nature being what it is, you will never be able to ensure that your administration will not become dishonest, impractical, tyrannical and unintelligent.

Take practical instances.

In Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, you have municipalities renowned all over the world for the general uprightness, honesty and capacity of its members. They are gladly entrusted with water, gas, and tramways. You might, doubtless, trust them with a great deal more. But if you go over to America you will find that in a

country more completely democratic than our own, the public authorities in New York and Philadelphia and other cities have engaged in fraudulent diversions of public money, in selfish and dishonest use of their public position to an extent which seems incredible to us of the mother country. And some of these monstrous frauds have been only possible through the power which the city committees have over public industries such as the gas. Would any sane person trust such bodies with further powers over industry? Before we can accept the Socialist position, we must get some reasonable guarantee that the same sort of thing will not happen in nations which we see happening to-day in municipalities abroad. We are no pessimists, very much the reverse. But the weakness of human nature is such that you cannot find any permanent guarantee for governments not deteriorating. It would be very delightful to be able to be a Socialist. There is nothing so pleasant as to have a pet theory of life, to believe in some future glorious perfection of human nature and society, and do your little best to attain that ideal. But unless you are absolutely certain that that ideal is a true one, it is better to lay aside dreams of a very distant perfect Great Britain, 500 years hence, which at best is a very long way off, and confine yourselves to the humbler duty of working at the more prosaic present. We will recognise as fully as any Socialist the evils that surround us to-day. We will judge evil and destroy it when we can, working by standards of right and justice which we have in common. But the first essence of strength is a recognition of our own limitations. The experience of the past teaches us that though the world progresses that progress is slow. And to hold out any reasonably near hope of a perfect society is to lay up for men a store of disappointment, when the world again declares its imperfection.

We cannot therefore hold the Socialist doctrine of a regenerated economic society.

Individualism.

But we repudiate just as much the hard and unsympathetic view of the Individualist. We regard the logical enforcement of the ideas of *laissez faire* as not only cruel and inhuman, but absurd. What can a man be thinking of in these days who says that every interference by the State with the individual is an evil? Does not the State force the child to go to school, force the taxpayer and the ratepayer to contribute to keep up the navy or the roads? We already in a hundred ways restrain the unbridled liberty of the individual to do what he likes with his own time and his own money. And yet men will tell you it is contrary to economic principle to shorten the hours of labour

by law, or to supply water or rebuild slums by municipal effort instead of by private enterprise. There is no question of principle involved at all. It is a question of expediency. And the case must be judged from every standpoint, moral, economical and political alike.

It is a very plausible argument, and one which has appealed to many good men, that it is a fact of nature that the weak must go to the wall and that it is fighting in the face of nature to support the weaker. The strict adherence to this theory made a man as warm-hearted as John Bright an opponent of the Factory Acts. But those who are slaves to a doctrine are often false to a doctrine. They pursue the shadow of it. Admitting competition to be the eternal law of the world, have we anything approaching to free competition to-day in Great Britain? Suppose we recognise it as a primary fact of human nature that the weak will in the long run give way to, and die out before, the stronger and fitter, that is no reason why a man who is capable of being strong, healthy, and successful should be degraded into, or allowed to become, a weak, sickly, inefficient creature by the evils of society, in order that he may so fail in the race. There are thousands, tens of thousands, in this land of ours who are born so feeble or diseased that the world could never be a joy to them, life never worth living. But there are also hundreds of thousands who now live more or less comfortless, sordid, drunken, dissolute, failing lives who would not do so with better opportunities. Nature has liberally equipped many such men for the race of life. But society has said to them, "You are to be content with what meagre education you can get in an elementary school till you are thirteen, you must then go down a mine or into a factory to listen to the rattling of the coal trucks and the clatter of the shuttles till you are too old to work any more, you must labour each day till you are weary and can only enjoy yourself by the false excitement which you can get at the inevitable public house at the nearest corner, and when your meagre twenty shillings a week begins to drop at last to ten, six, nothing, you may take yourself to the workhouse to die."

There is no reason why that should not have been the fate of thousands of the more prosperous part of our population if bred under different conditions. And yet they say that free competition in England brings the best and fittest to the top. So it will, but not until you give equality of opportunity to all men.

Equality of Opportunity.

It is in these words *Equality of Opportunity* that we shall find the motto for social progress in these times. Equality was one of the

watchwords of the French Revolution. But equality, pure and simple, is a vain phrase. Does anyone think that a poor natural dullard could ever, with the best training, with the best food, with the best teachers, reach the intellectual eminence of Mr. Gladstone? Could a naturally weakly child be trained to the muscular strength of a Sandow? The French Revolution failed in a great degree because it aimed at making all men equal, and all men cannot be equal. Democracy and freedom of thought have not made all men equally good statesmen or equally good thinkers. But they have enabled the best statesmen to come to the top and they have given the best thoughts as good a chance as the worst thoughts, so that by their natural superiority the best thoughts persuade the most men. Before that, men were slaves in politics in having to obey the laws of the few, they were slaves in thought because they had to obey the prevailing mode of thought. So now in life in general, the best man is not free to prove himself the best. He is a slave to his conditions. He is a slave to his unhealthy home. He is a slave to his long hours. He is a slave to his opportunities for drunkenness. He is a slave more than all to his ignorance which his inefficient education causes. What we want is that the opportunity of all should be equal, and then we shall know who is truly the best and fittest.

Now this it is which is the central idea of modern progress. It is to this which the Newcastle Programme was to a great extent directed, and it is to this that we shall consciously aim in the future. Let us take some practical applications of what is meant.

Education.

The greatest advantage, perhaps, which wealth can buy is a good education. It is the greatest difference that exists between men, what store of knowledge they have and the way in which they can use their brains. Education, in the long run, is the most valuable property a man can have. It enables him to work better. It gives him better companions. It gives him infinite means of enjoyment which he cannot get otherwise. Now what is the state of education here? A certain small part of the population gets the best education which the times can provide. But the mass of the population gets a little teaching in reading, writing, and arithmetic. And many people try to make them think they are educated when they have a smattering of the three R's. The average working man leaves school, probably, about 13; the average shopkeeper, farmer, or clerk, perhaps, 15. Now, very few boys can possibly have been taught to use their minds properly by that age, or can have even begun to dip into the endless

store of interests which a good education affords. They are dragged away by the supposed pressure of material circumstances; they are told they will starve if they do not work, and that book-learning will not keep the wolf from the door. That is true enough. But it is immensely exaggerated. How many thousands of fathers are there who send their children to work the moment the law allows them in order to save a few shillings through the child's earnings? What a much more profitable speculation, from the most sordid point of view, a well-taught child would be to the parents a few years later, if they would let it go to school till it had had its intelligence sharpened a little. Of course, all this cannot be cured in a moment. But we ought to refuse to be satisfied with education as it is.

We can begin at any rate by picking out many more of the promising boys and girls of all classes and giving them a full education. We can strengthen the system of secondary education and increase the scholarships to enable them to make their way, if they can profit by it, to the Universities. We can train better teachers; we can have more teachers. We can insist that mistaken parents shall not be allowed to put their children to work at the age they do now, by raising the age up to which children must remain at school. Twenty-two or twenty-three is not thought too late for a rich man's son to go into his profession and begin the work of his life. His education is not what is called finished till then. That opportunity for full education is impossible for long ages for the whole community, we admit; but the only rule which ought to guide us is that a child ought to be educated as long as it is possible for him to put off the day of turning his hand to labour. And we have not yet nearly reached the limit. By adopting the policy—

- (1) Of giving the fullest possible education which economic pressure and the resources of the State can afford to *all* children,
- (2) Of offering opportunities for a full course of the best education to as many of the clever children of all classes as possible,

we shall be doing something to equalise the start in life. Nowadays a few have a very big handicap given them, while the majority start together at scratch, jostling one another, stumbling over one another, shoving one another out of the course in the glorious race of so-called free competition in our land.

Hours of Labour—National Leisure.

Then there is the whole subject of overwork. It is one of the greatest of our social questions. It is not a mere question of giving

men time for amusement. It is very monstrous, of course, that one set of men should be able to play all their time and yet live, and that others should work all their time to escape starvation, and have no leisure or spare energy for the lighter side of life. What is worse is that if a man exhausts all his energy in manual labour, he is unfit and unable to develop his mind and faculties. Of course, there is a small proportion of overworked working men and shop attendants who fill their spare evenings in reading and debating, and get a lively interest in politics, economy, and literature. But they are the men who have a physique which overcomes all hardship and enables them to work all day without strain provided they can get their night's rest. But with the average man, as time goes on, the twelve or fourteen hours a day absorb all his powers. He looks only to the nearest amusement which he can get, the public-house by preference, at best the theatre or billiard-table. There is nothing to say against the theatre and billiard-table, only that they are not the end of human existence. A great country is made by men who have great minds and high ideas. A nation that spends its time alternately in the theatre and workshop is a stage better than the nation that spends it in the pot-house and workshop. But the best nation is that in which a large part of its people have leisure, and are not too tired to use it in art, literature, or politics.

National Health.

But by far the most serious side of overwork is its effect on the health of the nation. However much we recognise that the mind is in the long run worth more consideration than the body, we join hands with those who assert that the first thing is the bread and butter of the nation. The ordinary so-called common-sense man will say that it is obvious that for purposes of competition we must work our population to the utmost. So far we agree with him that if we are to hold our place among nations, we must be the nation that does the best work possible. But is the assertion true that we are now getting the best work? The popular economic principle at present is that as much work must be got out of each man every day as is possible. But what is the result of that principle? Not only that the worker constantly becomes or remains a mere machine, incapable of intelligent application to any new sort of labour, incapable of using his mind to make experiments and discoveries, which is always represented as one of the great God-sends of a competitive system; but his health is drained out of him while he is yet young. Between 40 and 50, when the powers of men in the healthy professions, politics, law, literature, the Church, are at their

best, or have not yet culminated, the average working man and artisan is beginning to fear superannuation. The best of his life is over. His vital energy has been wasted early in the ceaseless grind of long hours. No! If we require the full amount of work that a man can give the world—and we ought to require it—we ought to consider how much he can do in a lifetime, not in a day.

The span of man's life is threescore years and ten. It is not unnatural that an employer should consider the threescore and ten days during which he has to build a ship or run up a house. But the nation ought to take a larger view. It ought to say—We are now the greatest commercial people in the world. And why is that? It is not because in any particular year some man or set of men drained the whole resources of the country, and tired out their own energy and those of their workers for the accomplishment of some great end. But it is because we have had in England, for many generations, business men who have been skilled and educated as the business men of no other countries, and who have combined enterprise with due caution. It is also because we have had working men who, whether they guided the shuttle or piled the railway embankment, did their work twice as intelligently or twice as energetically as the working men of any other race. But how is it now that we find our commercial supremacy threatened by other nations? How is it that we feel competition so much more severely than before? It is not because our working men have become lazy, for their power of production has increased as fast as or faster than their hours of work have decreased. But it is because other nations are beginning to rival us in skill and strength. Our hope in the future then consists in even stronger and more skilful working men than we have at present. It is the healthy and intelligent nation that will in the long run beat the world. It is a crabbed and narrow and short-sighted policy to cry out because for a moment we are undersold by a nation that works fourteen hours to our ten. We are storing capital in the health of our country, while they are wasting what is more precious than gold.

It is not the aim of this paper to go in detail into how shorter hours may be obtained. The custom of short hours once obtained will be a possession for ever. For all men will then understand its advantages. We ought, therefore, on the one hand to run no risk from too hasty or general legislation which might discredit the cause. On the other hand, we ought to meet half way every offer of temperate advance, whether it comes from the employers, the trade unions, or the State.

What we need to realise chiefly is that the question has two sides. It is one of the great humanitarian movements, a rising

in indignation against conditions which make life scarcely worth the living to thousands of the population. But that is not its only side. We must not base the claim for change only on the first outcry of those who suffer. We must recognise also that the ill-health of a part is the ill-health of the whole of the nation, that the degradation of one section means the degradation of all. It is remarkable that the first eight hour movement was not initiated by working men at all. It first took root in the mind of an enlightened Lancashire employer, Mr. Fielden, who was enthusiastically supported by Robert Owen. They hoped to persuade employers and employed alike of the mutual and national advantage of shorter hours. In those days the workmen turned as deaf an ear as the employers to the suggestions of wisdom. But it shows that this movement and many others, which are called by shortsighted people class movements, really affect the prosperity of every class and section of the community.

Conclusion.

It is in this spirit that the Liberal party treats the whole range of social reform. We have to deal with drunkenness, we have to deal with the "hell-holes" in our towns, as Matthew Arnold called them, we have an endless vista of social questions. In every case there is a national, not a class, question at issue. In every case our sympathies are touched at the sufferings which are brought before us. But we ask for reform on a much broader ground than pity. Pity may be sentimental and misdirected. Promiscuous private charity often only stimulates the demand for, and dependence upon, charity. But we cannot go far wrong if we act consciously on the principle that every man ought to have an equal chance. We cannot so closely watch each individual that we can tell exactly what help ought to be extended to him to put him on the same footing as his neighbours, but we can see in the case of large bodies of men that one set has advantages which the others have not. We want to level up the opportunities of life. We want to see all men decently educated. We want all men to have time to think and rest. We want no man, who is anxious about his own or his children's health, to be prevented from choosing the suburbs of the town to live in, simply because tram or railway companies or speculating landlords refuse to give him the opportunity. They exist to afford him the opportunity. If they do not, they cease to justify their existence. We aim at the universal opportunity for amusement without an inevitable accompaniment of the temptation to drink. The necessity to work with the hands is no evil. What is evil are the sordid and unhealthy accompaniments of labour. Liberalism in this

generation takes up social reform with the hearty determination to make it more possible for those who deserve it to live well, and those who do not deserve it to no longer enjoy a life of ease without a sense of their responsibility to the community being forced upon them.

Liberalism does not now, any more than it ever did, hold out a social or political millennium. We declare that Great Britain may be a great deal better, and that as civilisation becomes more general the pace of our amelioration ought to be hastened. We do not wish to spend too much time in dreams of the future, because correct prophecy is impossible, while great things around us are crying for attention. What men living and thinking for themselves and their descendants have to do is—whatever their ultimate aspirations for the human race or their own souls—to use the tools they have at hand—to take men as they are—to take government as it is—to use what is best in it—to crush down what is evil—and, working "with firmness in the right as God gives them to see the right," to leave their generation one degree more happy and one degree more civilised than the generation of their fathers.

EDUCATION.

The Conservative Failure.

The present Conservative ministry came into power with the intention of solving the difficulties of elementary education. No part of the community, Liberal or Conservative, Churchman or Nonconformist, is satisfied with our education as it is. But after two Sessions of attempted legislation the Conservatives have given up the attempt, satisfied with a dole to the Church schools, and leaving the problem more tangled than before; no religious antipathies appeased, no educational aspirations satisfied.

The Liberal Opportunity.

It is clearly left to the Liberals to succeed where the Tories have failed. But there has not as yet been a sufficiently definite exposition of a large minded policy for the future. It is true that the opposition of the Liberal party in Parliament was the chief cause of the defeat of the Education Bill of 1896. It is true that this year, but less successfully, an attempt was made to prevent a national subsidy being paid to the Voluntary schools which was denied to the schools of the people. But in both these cases the opposition was merely negative. In 1896 the great cities protested against the attempt to cripple the work of the Board schools. In 1897 the outcry was against any further endowing of the Church. But if anyone asked what the Liberal policy was, the answer was not given sufficiently clearly.

There were a great many men who were saying something like this: "Yes, we quite agree that it is bad to subsidise the parson's schools. But at the same time we are anxious about the education of the people. We see how very poor the teaching is in most of our country districts, and in many of the Voluntary schools of cities. The Conservatives seem to be trying to improve them. It may not be a very statesmanlike proposal, still it is better than leaving bad alone. We may get a higher standard of education for our £600,000." The answer given by Liberals to such questioning was not definite; for, at the moment, they were acting as opponents of Church aggression and not as educational progressives. They were not declaring what ought

to be done; they were only saying what ought not to be done. It is the positive and progressive educational policy of Liberalism which I wish now to discuss. The attempt in this essay is

- (1) To see what our ideal of education is at which we aim;
- (2) To see what obstacles lie across our path in our advance to that end;
- (3) What system, under existing political, religious, and social conditions, will have the best chance of permanence and progressive development.

I.—THE AIM OF EDUCATION.**Equality of Opportunity for the Individual.**

First of all, then, what is the general hope for the future which we, the Liberal party, have for Education?

Abraham Lincoln, who rose to be the greatest of American statesmen, was the son of a farmer in Indiana and Illinois. While he was still in obscurity, trying by odd jobs to work out a sufficient livelihood, there was one thing which made his life bitter to him. He had had a most meagre education, which made him miserable and dumb before those who had had better opportunities than himself. We have a record of Lincoln's feelings; because his intense conviction and the great powers of work and thought which he possessed, enabled him in the long run to make up for the want of training in his youth. Now what Lincoln felt as a young man, that self-contempt and shame-facedness which comes from the consciousness that others are hopelessly superior, is the fate of tens of thousands in England, who never record their feelings, or whose record is ignored. With most men there is not the time or power to remedy the omissions of education.

Everyone pities the idiot, the deformed, the crippled, the man bowed by rheumatism or disfigured by paralysis. But what is much more pitiable is the man who, not from any freak of nature or taint of birth, but from the inequality of society, finds that, in spite of quite adequate natural capacities, he is passed in the race and hopelessly and permanently inferior to other men, for no other reason than that they have been taught to use their brains, while he has at most learnt to read clumsily, to spell, and do simple addition. Fortunately, men who do not possess a thing are seldom fully conscious of what they miss by not possessing it. But even as it is, I do not think we in the least realise the amount of misery caused by the knowledge that to only a few an opportunity has been given of profiting by the resources of knowledge and science and thought.

This is our great effort as a party in the future. We know that political equality has not brought real justice, as some men dreamed when democracy was new. We see good and strong men go under, and weak and inferior men rise, because their chances and position in life are unequal. Without hoping for perfection, we believe it possible to equalise those chances further than they are equalised at present. If we want a motto for the future, let it be—Equality of Opportunity for all men and women.

There is far more education in England to-day than thirty years ago. But let us put away from our minds the comfortable notion that even if all children had reached the seventh standard of the best Board school in England before they left school, we should have a right to sit contented for a moment, and plume ourselves on having done justice as a nation to the requirements of our people. Education, in the long run, means everything to a man, it means everything to a nation. It does not matter how you regard it. Consider it from the point of view of the individual. You may believe with the profoundest conviction that the salvation of England lies in every man struggling to do the best for himself, and rising as high as his capacity will raise him. You may believe it an inevitable fact of human nature that the weak and inefficient should go to the wall, and that in the long run it is not good to prevent it. But even so, as long as *one* man is carefully trained and prepared for running the race, and a *hundred* are left with only half-taught rudiments of education, you have no true competition. You have men rising to the top, not because they are the best men, but because they are the favoured individuals, to whom the world says, "Because you came into being in this rank of life you shall be selected for a special training which your fellows shall not get."

A Highly Trained Industrial Nation.

But if you look at education from the point of view of the whole nation, there is even graver cause for anxiety. Every year we hear more of the danger that foreign competition is driving us out of our accustomed markets. We are ceasing to have the monopoly of coal and cotton. Not only America, but even European nations are learning to rival us in producing the very things upon which we have been accustomed to believe that our commercial supremacy depends. We have been much too much in the habit of taking for granted that there is an innate superiority in the English business man and English artisan and English navvy. We talk glibly of our commercial capacity, our doggedness, our hard-headedness, as if they accounted for the

unexampled, unprecedented growth of our commerce in this century, while other nations were remaining stagnant and unenterprising. We should be wiser if—not omitting to pat ourselves on the back for our success—we put away pride, and considered that, like every other success, ours has depended on certain facts, and that the same facts are never eternal in this world.

We have had more peace than other nations. We have never suffered invasion for two hundred years. During the wars of the last century and the beginning of this, while our competitors, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, etc., were wrecked by civil strife and foreign wars, were losing their navies and their foreign trade, we positively gained by war; we won new colonies, we strengthened our naval supremacy. Added to that, our people were on the whole better fed and better taught than those of any other nation. But that time is gone. We can no longer say that the securities for peace are greater here than for many of our competitors. If we went to war, we can no longer hope that war would bring us a larger commerce. We have all to lose, and little to gain. But above all, in the arts of peace other nations are learning to rival us. Although the English miner still hews more coal in a day, and the cotton spinner can mind more spindles than the foreigner, the foreigner in many trades has already passed us, and may even invade our peculiar territories before long.

Why, above all things, is that? It is because competition is, in the end, a matter of men and not of chance, because foreign nations are learning that the skilled and intelligent worker, whose brain is awake, whose mind is trained, as well as his muscles strong, will in the long run beat the worker who is inferior in intelligence. We are not yet beaten. But that is how we shall be beaten, if we do not make strenuous and conscious efforts to keep our whole people healthier, stronger, and, above all, better educated than the German, the Frenchman, the Swede, and the American, who are threatening to take the bread out of our mouths.

A Noble Nation.

On one higher ground yet we want education. It is more important than to have a materially prosperous nation, it is more important than to have a healthy nation, or a nation that has the time and wish to enjoy itself in sport and pleasure—to have a thoughtful and noble one. We aim at giving all our people some interest in knowledge, in ideas, and in all the thousand activities of the mind. And it is only, in the long run, a nation that has been taught by education to use its mind, that will use it to any good and true purpose.

So these are our great problems in education.

1. To provide for every man a much fuller mental training and store of knowledge than the mass of men now get. We are faced with the difficulty that children are forced to go to work before they are physically and mentally fit for work, in order to be able to live. And the lack of foresight on the part of parents is a constant bar to raising the age of leaving school. We also have continually to persuade the ratepayer that one of the safest investments for money in the long run is education. But as far as the economic pressure and the resources of the State allow, our first principle is to provide a complete education for all children, not stopping short contented at any particular point.

2. We must make it possible for clever children of all classes to get the best higher education which the knowledge of the age will provide, by means of scholarships, secondary schools, and finally a more liberal management of the universities and seats of higher learning.

II.—THE OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS IN EDUCATION.

We have now reached the second part of our subject, i.e., what is the stage to which we have already reached, where is our present system deficient what are the obstacles to progress?

School Boards Progressive since 1870.

When the Act of 1870 was passed, the functions and the possibilities of elementary educational bodies were not very clear even to the enthusiastic promoters of that educational charter. One thing was clear to all reformers, that all children ought to have a rudimentary knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The Government reports of that day reveal a condition of widespread ignorance which it is almost impossible for us to conceive of, though we are only separated from that time by a quarter of a century. Of the condition of the million or so of children who got any schooling at all the Government Inspectors reported that:—

"Of four-fifths of the scholars about to leave school, either no account, or an unsatisfactory one, is given by an examination of the most strictly elementary kind."

Of the children who attended school only a little over a quarter stayed till they were ten years of age. And it does not require much experience of children to estimate how much knowledge was likely to be retained by those who left for the factory or the mine before they were ten years of age. But worst of all, in 1870, out of the 318,934 children in school over ten years of age, only 112,704 passed even the test of examination in the lower standards; 100,000 children only

among the artisan and wage earning classes of the country could pass the simplest test of an examination in the rudiments of reading and writing. It was no wonder that with most people the chief hope was to teach the nation to read and write, and that any thought of extensive opportunities for the middle and lower classes of higher and fuller education was chiefly confined to men of exceptional foresight and broad-mindedness.

For the first ten years of the working of the new Education Act, the leading object of the Department and the School Boards was to get the simple foundation of education properly taught to all children. There was little more that could be done. The soil had to be prepared for planting the better seed. And for a time the nation was content with a stiff system which made its ideal the passing of examinations in the simplest subjects, which were learnt in a parrot-like, unintelligent, formal way for the most part, but did make the children able to receive the fuller instruction which was preparing.

From the very first, some bodies, and notably the London School Board, had not merely shown an intention to make of the children's minds machines which chance might set going for some useful purpose, but aimed at trying to teach them how to use them. For fifteen years the great School Boards of England and some of the better Voluntary schools, backed in a hesitating way by the Education Department, have really been trying to make education a good preparation for the difficulties and responsibilities of life. They have called into existence a class of highly paid teachers who, as a rule, do not merely think of cramming the children for examinations without caring whether they understand what they are learning. The teachers now are a class of people who spend infinite trouble in waking up the minds of the children, encouraging the backward and stimulating the clever. They are required to teach, as a regular thing, such subjects as history, geography, science, which they cannot do merely out of books or by rule, but by an intelligent variation of reading, conversing and questioning. The girls in our better elementary schools are prepared for their household duties by instruction in needlework, laundry and cookery. The boys receive preliminary training in technical skill at woodwork classes. Drawing, painting, modelling, are largely encouraged. Singing is universal. In every way we are making education a bigger and fuller preparation for citizenship. We have indeed as a nation much to be proud of in what we have done in twenty-five years. It is some compensation for the disgrace and danger of being the last of the great British peoples to accept education as an essential duty of Government.

Church Schools Not Progressive.

But here is the darker side to the picture. This progress is not universal. This spirit of generous completeness is absent in the management of a vast number of our elementary schools. The majority of the managers of Church schools show no disposition to encourage a larger education, to raise the standard of teacher required, to add to the subjects taught in their schools. Many of our best Board schools lead the Education Department by starting experiments in education which the Department sees fit to encourage with its blessing and, what is more important, with its grants, when they are proved to be successes. To the London School Board, the Education Department is generally a friendly adviser. It is not very often that Her Majesty's inspectors have to use any threat of diminishing the grant if they do not make improvements in their buildings or teaching. But in the case of a very large proportion of the Voluntary schools the Inspector hardly exists for any other purpose. He is a most unpopular person with the Church managers. It is fortunate for him that the practice of excommunication is in abeyance, or I believe he would enjoy the preference given to the Lollard in the Middle Ages. He owes his unpopularity to the fact that thousands of the Church schools in the country are barely kept up to the minimum standard required by public opinion, as expressed in the rules of the Department. He is forced every time he visits them to criticise omissions and inadequacies which in a better school would be provided as natural necessities.

Inferiority of Church Schools.

No doubt many instances might be cited of excellent Church schools. But what we want to know is the working of the whole system. And we find that, taking the results of the schools as a whole, the Board schools show at present an enormous superiority, apparent in nearly every department of their work. The numbers of children in average attendance at the Church schools is 1,873,121; in Board schools, 1,978,688. And it is significant of the popularity of the Board schools that, in the last ten years, from 1885-1897, while the Church school attendance has grown by nearly 300,000, from over 1,600,000) to over 1,870,000, the School Board attendance has increased by nearly 900,000, from over 1,100,000 to nearly 1,970,000. Now although the number of children attending the Church schools is much the same as that attending the Board schools, the total sum earned in grants from the Government by Board schools considerably exceeds the sum earned by Church schools. The Board schools earn 19s. 7*½*d.

per child, while the Church schools earn only 18s. 7*½*d. per child. That means that the general standard of teaching in the Church schools is considerably less than the general standard in the Board schools.

Then take the figures of the higher branches of Education which are taught in elementary schools. In the first place the Board school system encourages children to continue their education longer than in Church schools, and after the age of eleven there are many more children who continue to be taught in the higher standards of Board schools than in the higher standards of Church schools.

Next, if you take the special subjects which are taught in elementary schools to clever children, you will find that the Board schools are immensely ahead of the Church. Three times as many children are taught algebra in Board schools as in Church schools. Four times as many are taught French and German, four times as many are taught chemistry, twice as many shorthand, and while only 500 children are taught mechanics in the Church schools, forty times as many, or 20,000, are taught mechanics in the Board schools. It is only in agriculture, where the number only amounts to the paltry total of 1,200, that the Church schools teach more than the Board schools.

But the most startling inferiority of the Voluntary schools is in the sort of teachers they provide and the way they treat the teachers. In the actual number of the teachers in the Church and Board schools there is not so great a discrepancy. But the difference in quality is enormous. Certificates of competence are allowed to teachers who have certain qualifications and have been passed by the Government inspectors. And the Board schools—which have the same total of children to teach as the Church schools—have 4,500 more certificated teachers than the Church schools, that is teachers of the best type available for elementary teaching. The number of Church teachers is made up of an immense number of additional teachers, many of them mere children, acting as pupil teachers without knowledge, experience, or certificates, and paid by salaries which prove that they are either sweated, or that they are not worth more than a miserably low salary.

The disproportion in the matter of salaries is most conclusive of the very great inferiority of the Church schools. In the first place the salaries of the additional certificated teachers, especially of the women additional teachers, is miserably low. The average which an additional teacher gets, if he is a man, is £75 in a Church school; £102 in a Board school (£27 less in a Church school). The average of an additional mistress in a Church school is only £53; in a Board school £79 (again £26 less in a Church school). In the Church schools there

are 617 additional women teachers teaching at the rate of less than £1 a week, with a salary of less than £45 a year. If anything can be called sweating, I think that can. For these people are not mere learners in the art of teaching (pupil teachers), but women with certificates of competence from the Government.

But the most striking thing of all is the encouragement given by the Board schools to high-class teachers by the offer of large salaries. How are you ever to improve education unless you, year by year, offer greater advantages to a better and better class of men and women to undertake the duty of teaching? In the Board schools there are many more openings for obtaining really good salaries which will attract really good men and women teachers than in the Church schools. In the Church schools only 114 women earn more than £150 a year. In Board schools 1,194 women earn over £150 a year. In Board schools 341 men earn more than £250 a year (and of these 343 earn over £300), while in the Church schools only 113 men earn more than £250 (and only 30 of these more than £300).

As far as figures are capable of showing how far the Church schools at present stand behind the Board schools, these should be convincing. But there is hardly an attempt to dispute the fact. The Church party have taken up the wail about the "intolerable strain" to which their schools are subjected in competition with the Board schools. They admit that their inferiority is patent and indisputable in the towns, where they are side by side with the Boards, and where, in order to prevent all the children falling into the clutches of that "shapeless and shifting monster, undenominationalism" they are forced to make some progress. How much worse is the condition of the Church schools where there is no threatening alternative of a Board in the thousands of rural parishes where the Church schools have almost a monopoly. In a thousand schools, where voluntary subscriptions have filtered down to nothing, there is no support except what comes from the Government grant. In 3,000 others the subscription per child is under 5s. a year. The teaching which can be given under such a parsimonious system can consist of very little more than the merest rudiments. Good appliances, fresh and bright rooms, efficient teachers cannot be provided with such a limited allowance. There is yet in England no general attempt to give the rural districts of the country the fuller education which we are all beginning to recognise as necessary in the towns. And yet our rural population is not less fitted for receiving thorough education. The health of country is better than that of town-bred children, certainly than the thousand gutter-urchins of any great city. And on the whole the

healthy learn better than the feeble. By allowing the progress of the country districts to stagnate, we condemn to a deplorable half-education that great mass of men from which our town industrial population must be perpetually recruited, if they are to be able to resist the deteriorating influences of the atmosphere and conditions under which they are at present forced to live.

Church Theory—The Lack of Money.

Now why is it that the Church schools are so much behind the Board schools? What are the causes of the difference which becomes more striking and deplorable every year? First of all the Voluntary schools cannot obtain in subscriptions as much as the Boards are able to get in rates from a liberal public. The Churchmen are saying now: "This that you say about our schools is all very true. We do not provide as good education as the Board schools, but the reason is very simple—we have not as much money to spend. We are quite as anxious to educate the children well as the managers of Board schools, but, as you have been saying, the goodness of the teaching depends to a great extent upon how much you can pay for it. The Board schools are able to raise the rate when they want more money. But we, alas! have to go to our subscribers, which is always an awkward and unpleasant thing to have to do. The defenders of our faith are so slow to untie their purse-strings. Give us more money from the State and you will see at once what we can do."

Real Reason—Bad Management.

Now this sounds very fine arguing at first, and there is, we must all admit, a good deal of truth in it. But it is not the whole truth. Have we really ground for believing that if the Church schools had quite as much to spend as the Board schools they would provide as good teaching? Are we sure of the educational fervour of the ardent Churchmen who are raising this cry of injustice to the Voluntary schools? I am entirely sceptical of their being so very anxious to spread the light of higher education through every home in the country. I do not say they are opposed to advance; but they have a different interest which dominates their action and which engrosses their activity—and that is the spread of religion according to the particular creed of the Church to which they belong.

Tests for Teachers.

If the managers of Church schools really had education as a predominant interest, do you think that they would, when they want a school teacher, be always advertising for one who is a good

Churchman and a communicant and who can play an organ or harmonium and lead a choir? Do you think "No Dissenter need apply" would be written large, as it is, over the door of nearly every Church school in the land? I do not mean to say that there is not a supply of the most excellent Churchmen and harmonium players who are excellent teachers as well. But every one of us very well knows that a Nonconformist, a Jew or a philosopher, is just as likely to be a good teacher, and is very often a better teacher than a Churchman. What does that mean but that, if you exclude any man or woman who does not hold the faith of the Church, you limit your choice of teachers, and so in the long run are sure to get a much less excellent teaching staff than if you opened your doors to men and women of every faith, and asked only, "Who is the best teacher?"

And yet the Church people say they are as eager to get the best education for the children as the Board schools, who, with very few exceptions, do *not* ask a man's faith when they choose him or reject him as a teacher.

Clerical Control.

But there is a further and very powerful reason why the Church schools are less likely to provide as good education as the schools governed by representative bodies. The managers of the Church schools are chosen only from one section of the population. The School Boards are chosen from all. On the School Boards of our large towns there are men who hold every shade of religious and philosophical opinion. Provided a man is anxious to devote his time to education, if he has made a special study of it, there is always a very good chance of his getting a place on the School Board of his town sooner or later. It is true that there are School Board elections which turn on religious controversies. But even there you get, to a great extent, the best men of the rival creeds, and they are chosen partly because their practical qualities as educationalists appeal to those electors who take no interest in their theology. If you look at the present London School Board you will find on both sides some of the most active intellects in London. Those members who are not Churchmen work with an enthusiasm that no second rate intellect could apply to educational questions, but they would be entirely excluded if the system were Voluntary and worked in the interests of a particular religion. Yet throughout the country districts of England, this Voluntary system is the rule. No doubt in some places the parson or his wife may happen to be the best people in the village to have the control of education. But the clergy on the average are by no means cleverer as a class, or more highly educated than many other sections of our population.

They are as a rule good-hearted and humane. But they have less and less the monopoly even of that. There is, indeed, one reason why, as a caste, they are not especially fitted to have any exclusive privilege over education. The Church has, unfortunately, never been enthusiastically on the side of progress. The clergy have never actively promoted any movement which had liberty or equality for its aim or motto, until it had reached the stage when more was to be gained by acquiescence than by denunciation. And though to-day, in many city parishes, there are clergymen who are beginning to put social progress and enlightenment before dogma and Church privilege, there is no reason to expect a change of attitude on the part of the clergy in general. It is clear enough from the decided and often virulent hostility of the Church to the progress of education under the great School Boards, that no new enthusiasm has been substituted for the respectable dilatoriness which is the tradition of the Church of England.

Therefore a system which permanently excludes from participation a great part of the active men interested in education in almost every rural district and many parts of our cities, and which delivers over many schools for long periods to the inevitable management of a permanent clergyman, often entirely unfit for the duty, is obviously inferior in the long run to a system by which the best men in a district may be called out, and where incompetence can be corrected by removal. And the system of denominational management is now, and will by its very nature remain, inferior for educational purposes to management by the community.

III.—REFORM IN EDUCATION.

The third part of our enquiry is how to rectify the worst deficiencies of the present system, and establish a condition which will be both permanent, and capable of elastic development according to the growing requirements of the nation.

The Past Radical Policy.

The answer of the indignant Radical and the Nonconformist is simple—"Away with the Voluntary schools—substitute everywhere Boards elected by the public for committees of privileged managers." That cry has come down to us from 1870. When Gladstone's Government introduced the Education Act, it would have been a simple thing to put the whole of elementary education into the hands of School Boards. It has been shown above how hopelessly inefficient was the teaching provided by the then existing Church schools,

In these days the Churchmen appeal to the public to leave them their educational privileges out of gratitude for their past and present services. They claim to have initiated elementary education and to be giving a good training to hundreds of thousands of children. But their pretensions were far less easy to maintain in 1870, when their system was exposed to all men as notoriously inadequate, producing the pitiable result of only 100,000 children passing the elementary test. At that time it would have been easy for Mr. Forster and Mr. Gladstone to have insisted on the Church resigning its special privileges. The nation expected it. The Dissenters demanded it. The Tories would have bowed to it. But to the disgust of their friends and the delight of their foes, the Government decided to assist the existing Voluntary schools to continue in existence under the present management and to give facilities for building new ones. The Nonconformists protested as they could. My father threw up his first position in a Liberal Government. But the Bill was passed unaltered and the one opportunity was lost of establishing a universal popular system without a prolonged contest during which the higher interests of education were bound to suffer.

It is natural that many of those who joined in that controversy should from that day to this regard the introduction of universal village Board schools as the real solution of our difficulties. They know how nearly such a system was introduced in 1870, and how easy it would have been to introduce it. They see how fully all their prophecies have been fulfilled, that the dual system has led to jealous thwarting of popular progress by Churchmen, that the parsons use their absolute position as managers to teach their own peculiar doctrines in the schools where the children of Dissenters are forced to attend. And it is no wonder that many men should still be hoping for the withdrawal of State support from the Church schools, that they should think it the duty of Liberal Governments to starve the Voluntary schools out of existence, or compulsorily replace them by popular boards, and that the Act of this year, which gives £600,000 to the Voluntary schools, should seem to them a most pernicious invention. It is indeed a serious blow to the policy.

Increased Strength of the Church Schools.

But they are right in the main after all. It is only that the situation has chang'd since 1870, and that in order to obtain the desired end we have to deal with altered conditions and seek a somewhat different means of accomplishment. The situation is very different to-day to what it was in 1870. The Church schools are in a far

stronger position. Deplorably inadequate as the education is in the majority of country schools, there are many which provide a thoroughly good training. They almost all of them manage to keep up to the standard required by the Department. No one can say to the Church managers that they are not providing some education. Many people have not the facts before them of the great inferiority of Church schools, do not appreciate the need of perpetual progress, and do not realise that the improvement of the Voluntary schools is due almost entirely to State assistance or compulsion, and not to ecclesiastical activity. These people are enabled to say what was impossible in 1870, "We owe them gratitude for the respectable general standard of education they provide. Let us leave them as they are. Give them a little more money."

County Education Boards Needed.

But there is one other great change of opinion and not the least important. That part of the population which has been most interested in education and has been carefully watching the work of our School Boards is not at all satisfied that a system of universal School Boards in all our country villages would be, from the educational point of view, the greatest possible improvement on the Voluntary schools. Sir John Gorst, in order to justify his educational proposals in 1896, made a jeering attack upon the village School Board; Sir John's cynical nature rejoices in unkind criticism, and it is only a pity that he did not indulge it more justifiably by explaining the vices of the *Church* village school. That did not suit his purpose. But a great deal of what he said was true. Although by universal School Boards we should get rid of the perpetual injustice to Nonconformists and to teachers who are not orthodox, we should not have the highest security for a really progressive education. Where are you to be certain of finding a man who cares about education, and, what is more important, knows about it, in the ordinary country village? It is as difficult a part of the science of government as exists. Can you expect the little populations of a hundred to five hundred to find, among the stay-at-home farmers and untaught rustics, men who can do what some of the best minds in London are doing for the London children? On the face of it the thing is absurd. In order to get good education you must draw from a larger circle than the parish and village, you must establish a system in which the best men of each county can exercise a controlling and stimulating influence upon all the schools.

Owing, then, to changes in the state of English opinion in the last

twenty-five years, we shall have to take these things into consideration in the next great educational reform. We must base our demand for a new system mainly on grounds of education, not upon hostility to Church privilege. Then we must find a system which we can be certain will give means for the growth of a universal and advanced standard of teaching in every school.

Proposals.

The leading features of a new arrangement would need to be:—

(1) There should be county educational bodies and not village boards as the supreme authority. We ought to have in every county a Board upon which the active educationalists of the county will think it worth while to sit, whether they are gentlemen, clergy, farmers or artisans. Such a body ought to have a general supervision over all elementary schools. Without perhaps at first endowing it with all the power of a City Board, it should be bound to see that there are enough school places for every child to get an education, that the ill-kept and ill-built schools are improved or replaced, that teachers are not underpaid or overworked by too large classes or by out-of-school duties, that a wider education and more advanced subjects are taught to all the cleverer children. In every way they must be responsible for a high standard of general education.

(2) They ought to be able to levy a county education rate. With a new and efficient education authority we need not any longer hesitate to think that more money might be spent on education. In addition, as is the case in the education of our cities, the rates would be fairly distributed, according to the rateable ability of the different districts. Now the poorest places have often to pay the highest education rate.

(3) The local boards of managers ought to be made more representative, no longer generally monopolised by one denomination.

(4) There ought to be no religious tests for teachers. It would be better to leave the choice of assistants at any rate to the local managers, but there ought to be the provision which we enforce in London, that no question is to be asked about religious belief.

Religious Teaching.

But in order to accomplish such a reform we must not alienate any who are really upon our side. There are a great many keen educationalists who, while really anxious for progress and disgusted with the present water-logged system, take the view of the advanced Churchmen that some special teaching for his children in Church of England tenets is the right of the Church of England parent. We

ought in justice to meet the Church about religious teaching. We ought to insist with undeviating firmness on perfect popular control and unsectarian appointment of teachers, but on the question of the Bible lesson we ought to meet Churchmen half-way. If they are genuinely discontented with the undogmatic teaching which is bound to be the rule wherever the average man has his way in England, let them provide their own instruction and withdraw the children whose parents want the teaching of the parson and the Sunday-school teacher. It may be the cause of some difficulty in arranging the school. There may be occasionally stupid quarrels as to whether this or that parent wants the child to go to the parson or not, but if we give the Church this concession, they cannot justly complain of oppression. They would have full opportunity of teaching their tenets to those who asked for them, but not of imposing it on others who do not want them, and if they opposed education reform then, it would be palpable to the world that they sought to retain inequitable privileges and not, as they now assert, merely to retain the right to teach their own children as they please.

Conclusion.

This great question is worth your attention and worth your study. We are in near danger of a period of educational stagnation, not because the nation is tired of progress, but because the machine is clogged. We have to replace a great part of our machinery by a more modern instrument. If we do not, we may begin to mark time at the beginning of next century, as we were doing at the beginning of this. We must never forget how much distance we have to cover which has already been passed by other peoples. The principles of education to which we are now awaking were the declared ideal of the Scotch people three hundred years ago. During all the intervening time, while we have been slumbering, they have been building up the intelligence of their race. It is time that we carried into practice in England the doctrines of John Knox, that we took care that in every village was a good village school where all are taught well morality and sound learning, and that, as the next stage, we should say, in the words of the Book of Discipline: "If the children be found apt to letters and learning, then may they not (we mean, neither the sons of the rich, nor yet the sons of the poor), be permitted to reject learning; but must be charged to continue their study, so that the Commonwealth may have some comfort by them."

1950-2030

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